



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS  
IN EDUCATION

**A REPORT FROM THE  
OFFICE OF  
HER MAJESTY'S  
CHIEF INSPECTOR OF  
SCHOOLS**

# **THE EDUCATION OF TRAVELLING CHILDREN**

**A survey of educational  
provision for Travelling  
children**

## **CONTENTS**

	<b>Paragraph</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	1-3
<b>MAIN FINDINGS</b>	4-14
<b>THE TRAVELLING COMMUNITIES</b>	
History, Culture and Educational Opportunities	15-36
<b>DEMOGRAPHY</b>	37-45
<b>STANDARDS, RESPONSE TO EDUCATION PROVISION, BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENDANCE</b>	
Standards	46-50
Response to Educational Provision	51-52
Behaviour	53-55
Attendance	56-57
<b>ACCESS</b>	
Obstacles	58
Response Strategies	
Policies	59-60
Funding	61-65
Management	66-72
Outreach to Families and Schools	73-86
The Work of EWOs	
Traveller Education Services	
Education Otherwise than at School	
Special Educational Needs	
Pre-School Education	
Quality of Teaching and Support	87-95
<b>ISSUES</b>	96-103
Appendix 1 - Local Education Authorities Visited	
Appendix 2 - Distribution of Gypsy Traveller caravans	
Appendix 3 - Attendance Statistics	

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. This report summarises the evidence from a series of visits conducted by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). These visits were made by Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) to Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and three self-governing grant maintained schools (GM) in England, over a period of three years from September 1992 (See Appendix 1 for a list of LEAs visited). HMI undertook these visits in order to examine the quality of the educational opportunities and provision for Travelling children and the extent to which it succeeded in supporting the educational attainment of the children.

2. During the period of the inspection, visits were made to Traveller Education Services (TES) and LEAs without such services, schools with Travelling pupils on roll, and a variety of Travelling communities. Discussions were held with LEA officers, advisers and inspectors, TES coordinators, teachers, classroom assistants, educational welfare officers (EWOs), Gypsy, Traveller and Fairground liaison officers, and parents and pupils. Where possible HMI attended inter-agency meetings, in-service training sessions and conferences and specialist resource centres and consulted widely with those working in the voluntary field and others in professional areas of work connected to nomadic communities. The latter involved talking with lawyers, doctors, Traveller and non-Traveller civil rights workers and academic researchers.

3. The vast majority of LEAs visited were in receipt of Section 210 additional funding paid under the 1988 Education Reform Act. The inspection, therefore, focused heavily on much of the work undertaken by Section 210 approved projects. (See section on Funding for details).

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

4. On the basis of new statistical evidence the number of Travelling children in England aged 0 - 16 may be as large as 50,000, a significant advance on earlier estimates.

5. The administration of Section 210 and other additional funding is efficient and effective. The grant represents good value for money.

6. Considerable progress has been made in the development of positive attitudes and trusting relationships between schools and the different Travelling communities, who, by reason of their nomadic life styles, have traditionally been hindered in their access to education.

7. Over England as a whole access to school is significantly more secure for Travelling children of primary age and there is evidence to suggest that although there are below average levels of participation at the pre-school level the situation is slowly improving.

8. Access to the curriculum for secondary aged children remains a matter of grave concern. There are possibly as many as 10,000 children at this phase who are not even registered with a school.
9. The attendance at school of Travelling children is slowly improving, but the average figures are still unacceptably low.
10. There is no separate systematic and unified recording of the standards achieved by Travelling pupils. However, standards of achievement based on inspection evidence are satisfactory for Travelling pupils in the early years. Standards for pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 are generally improving although there is serious and legitimate concern that for some groups, despite an earlier start at school and more regular attendance, standards of achievement, particularly in English, are disappointing. Standards of achievement at the secondary phase are very variable, but on the whole unsatisfactory.
11. The work of Traveller Education Services (TES) is generally of a high standard. Staffing and other resources are well managed and deployed and are generally very effective within the constraints imposed by the current level of funding paid under Section 210 of the 1988 Education Reform Act.
12. The quality of teaching and other welfare support is generally good and outstandingly so in a significant number of projects.
13. A disproportionate number of Travelling pupils, particularly at the secondary phase, are excluded from school. This is despite the general assessment that the behaviour of Travelling pupils is good.
14. The number of Travelling young people who have access to, and take advantage of, post school vocational training and further and higher education is worryingly small.

## **THE TRAVELLING COMMUNITIES**

### **HISTORY, CULTURE AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**

15. The phrase "Travelling Communities" is used to cover those identifiable groups, some of which have minority ethnic status, who either are, or have been, traditionally associated with a nomadic lifestyle, and include Gypsy Travellers, Fairground families (or Showpeople), Circus families, New Travellers, Bargees and other families living on boats. Throughout this publication the term "Travelling persons" is used to cover all of these communities unless more specific reference is required. While each community has its own distinctive lifestyle and traditions, it is not intended that the use of the specific or the generic terms should contribute to any stereotypical definitions. Clear cut distinctions are not always possible and no intention to offend should be inferred from the use of any of

these terms.

16. It is acknowledged that there are inherent dangers in attempting to record briefly the history and culture of particular communities, but there are both interesting and important distinctions to be made between the different Travelling communities which are worthy of comment in this report.

17. Gypsy Travellers are by far the largest group among Travelling communities and constitute a recognised minority ethnic group for the purposes of the 1976 Race Relations Act. Gypsies have lived in England in substantial numbers since the beginning of the sixteenth century. Other groups of Gypsy Travellers including those of Scottish, Welsh and Irish heritage share in general terms a common history. In addition, there is a small but growing number of Gypsies from Eastern Europe with refugee status who have recently settled in south east England. There is little doubt that the Gypsies originate from nomadic Indian tribes which migrated westwards probably during the ninth and tenth centuries AD. At the end of the eighteenth century, a connection was established between the language spoken by the Gypsies and major contemporary north Indian languages. Most Gypsy Travellers have retained the use of their inherited language.

18. Although there is considerable variation in Gypsy cultural characteristics, there are some common features which have either a direct or indirect bearing on education. Gypsies have always maintained an identity which has been markedly different from the rest of the settled population. In addition to long established nomadic patterns of life, Gypsy Travellers have a strong sense of independence, based partly on a pride and confidence in occupational adaptability and entrepreneurial skills. Other features, also shared by Gypsies resident in houses, include a sense of the strength and resilience of their community which is confirmed and reinforced by close extended family bonds. The central importance of the family places great value on children, their care and safety and their successful socialisation into adult Gypsy society. Family events, therefore, feature prominently in the community's social priorities. Cultural traditions are respected and adhered to perhaps more diligently than in the settled population possibly because of the community's outcast status and the hostile social reactions it frequently encounters. The family will usually see it as its duty to care for the elderly. At a more practical level, for example, most Gypsies have a very strict code of cleanliness. Living accommodation is likely to be immaculate although in some cases the immediate area outside their living accommodation may at times appear unsightly on account of its frequently being used for a number of semi-industrial processes.

19. The Plowden report<sup>5</sup> drew attention to the educational plight of Gypsy and other Travelling children in 1967. This report commented, " ... the children's educational needs

---

<sup>5</sup> "Children and their Primary Schools" A report of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England), "The Plowden Report", Appendix 12.

are nevertheless extreme and largely unmet .... They will require special attention and carefully planned action." For as long as education has been publicly provided, Gypsy Travelling children have had restricted access to schools for a variety of reasons. Nomadism has been, and still is in many cases, an important influence in this regard. Traditionally, the need of the family as a whole to exploit its collective labour power, as for example in the case of seasonal opportunities for casual agricultural work, has been a further factor militating against school admission and regular attendance.

20. While nomadism was primarily generated by both custom and the demands of work opportunities, in more recent times many Gypsy families have moved more frequently owing to a lack of sites where Gypsy families can legally stay. Since the end of World War II, Gypsy Traveller occupations have mainly shifted from rural to urban activities, and with the immense pressure on land use within the conurbations, evictions of Gypsy families from unauthorised encampments have been an additional disruptive influence on education. Two thirds of Gypsy Traveller families reside on or resort to permanent sites which are either provided by local councils under the 1968 Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act, or privately owned. Normal local charges and rents are levied for these sites. There is, however, still a significant amount of movement between sites and many families travel during the summer months for work and/or social occasions such as the great horse fairs.

21. The shortfall in site provision adversely affects approximately a third of Gypsy Traveller families at any one time and results in much unauthorised camping. Many Gypsy Travellers will say that 'travelling is in the blood' and whilst a significant proportion seem prepared to adopt a more settled existence, not necessarily in houses, but on permanent sites, a strong cultural identity is maintained.

22. A majority of Gypsy Traveller families have a positive attitude to formal education and are generally anxious for their children to acquire basic literacy skills while in primary education. However, there are some cultural aspects of Gypsy family life which may clash with the culture of some schools and create hindrances to access and regular attendance. Some Travelling children find it hard adjusting to an indoor environment. The children may be very reluctant about changing for PE or about removing earrings. School trips and swimming may be declined owing to the fears parents may harbour about the care and safety of their children when out of school. Older Gypsy children will be expected to protect younger ones when at school, and after puberty, be expected to take on further adult roles within the family. The moral code within many Gypsy Traveller families can be very strict. Sex education would generally not be well received without prior parental consultation. Young girls are not generally allowed to mix alone with the opposite sex after puberty. This can cause mutual anxiety and difficulties for pupils, parents and schools. Another hindrance to access is the isolation or physical proximity to services including schools and a lack of basic facilities on some sites.

23. Historically, Gypsy Traveller children have also been hindered in their access to schools by the attitudes of some headteachers, governors and others in the non-Travelling settled society. Negative attitudes frequently manifest themselves in the refusal to admit Travelling children or in delay or the imposition of difficult or discriminatory conditions. In some cases, threats and acts of physical violence by members of the settled community have been sufficient to deter Gypsy parents from placing their children in school. The Swann Report drew attention to this situation. "Their [Travellers'] situation illustrates to an extreme degree the experience of prejudice and alienation which faces many other ethnic minority children".<sup>6</sup> While incidents of direct racial discrimination by schools and/or settled communities are now less prevalent, and the 1976 Race Relations Act affords some measure of protection, the long term effect of this on a small number of families has been to foster a resistant attitude to formal education. This attitude however, becomes more general at the end of primary education. There is a strongly felt suspicion of education at the secondary phase. A belief that much of the curriculum is irrelevant to Gypsy Traveller interests and lifestyles, combined with a fear that prolonged schooling may erode a confident cultural and ethnic identity, and weaken their physical resistance to the rigours of a nomadic life, are but some of the assumptions which may underpin much of this suspicion.

24. Many Gypsy parents view secondary schools as a threat to their strongly held moral values surrounding girl/boy relationships, formal and informal sex education and drug addiction. As mentioned previously, economic roles and child-care responsibilities frequently depend on adolescent members of the family. If children have acquired basic educational skills during the primary years then prolonged secondary schooling is viewed by some parents as an impediment to maturity. Secondary schools can also be places where racist bullying can be most corrosive, again a constant fear frequently based on parents' painful personal experiences. Gypsy parents see their customs and moral values as important and worth retaining. The persistence and maintenance of their way of life thus depends heavily on avoiding experiences and influences which threaten to erode their value system. Impressionable youngsters in secondary school are seen to be vulnerable in this context.

25. Fairground families also have a distinctive culture and lifestyle which stretches back many centuries. Indeed, fairs in Britain have a long history. It is reported that the origins go back to pagan customs when seasonal gatherings were held for trade and festivity. Fairs continued to be promoted by the Romans in the interests of trade and communications. During the Middle Ages almost 5000 fairs were granted royal charters. These fairs not only attracted merchants, but also itinerant entertainers, jugglers, musicians and tumblers, perhaps the ancestors of today's Fairground people.

---

<sup>6</sup> "Education For All" Committee of Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, "The Swann Report", HMSO 1985 .



26. Fairground communities have a strong sense of family and see children as a great value and strength in terms of retaining a particular life style. The work of the fairground is frequently arduous and the lifestyle generally involves regular patterns of migration and the involvement of the whole family as a working unit. The Fairground community is generally well organised and collectively protects its interests and way of life partly by membership of the Showman's Guild of Great Britain which dates back to the end of the nineteenth century. Many Fairground families tend to own or rent winter quarters which act as their base and to which they return after the travelling season for the repair and maintenance, together with the commissioning, of new equipment. Normal local charges and taxes are levied for these winter-base sites. The living-wagon of many Fairground families is generous in style and space, immaculately clean and usually doubles up as the administrative base of the family's business. The fairs themselves provide opportunities for the maintenance and extension of extended family networks.

27. Fairground families are generally interested in formal education for their children including secondary education. In the main, children attend their local schools during the winter season. However, a nomadic lifestyle has often prevented most Fairground children from gaining a continuous education. The routines of the peripatetic fairground business require a high level of regular and often frequent movement. The travelling season is long; it generally starts in early Spring and lasts till the late Autumn. Recent evidence suggests that the season is being lengthened at both ends owing to the effects of the economic recession. A very small proportion of these children avoid the educational discontinuity engendered by this life by being placed in boarding education or staying with relatives. The rest travel with their families throughout the season and have in the past either moved from one school to the next or have not attended school until the family returned to its winter quarters.

28. The first recorded modern circus was established in London in 1770. The long history of the circus has frequently been associated with family names stretching back over many generations.

29. Circuses tend to be owned and administered by a single family who may hire a range of acts to make up a particular season's repertoire. While most of the circuses are owned by British families, the circus troupe as a whole may well be drawn from a variety of international backgrounds. Circuses have a particularly long travelling season lasting nine to eleven months compelled by economic and business pressures and consequently only allowing a very brief stay at the winter base, if at all. The quality of living accommodation is similar to that previously described above. As with Fairground and Gypsy Traveller families, access to education is complicated by a nomadic lifestyle. Despite this, parents are generally very keen for their children to receive a sound and satisfactory education. The educational choices are similar to those faced by Fairground families, although in many cases, this is compounded by less well-established links with winter based schools, if at all, and some of the children speaking first languages other than English.

30. New Travellers, sometimes referred to as hippies, New Age Travellers or, inaccurately, as Gypsies, are a community of more recent origin. Some New Travellers took to a nomadic lifestyle in the Nineteen Sixties. In the last fifteen years their numbers have grown substantially. There are reported to be a wide range of reasons why so many young people have adopted such a new and dramatically different way of life. Amongst these it is suggested that poverty, homelessness and unemployment have been prime motivators, together with a desire to 'get back to the land' and exchange urban squalor and deprivation for healthier and more beautiful country environments. Added to this is the widely held ambition to explore and adopt a way of life which is seen as an attempt to overcome many of the environmental and social problems caused by over-industrialisation, materialism and inequality. Many New Travellers have established their families from within their group. Family ties are frequently strong because the nuclear families established are socially isolated from their extended family structures and receive a good deal of hostility and rejection from the settled population. Nomadism is prompted mainly for the purposes of work which is wide in range and includes art and craft work, and in some cases, catering and entertaining. Festivals and other gatherings also bring New Travellers together and these provide similar social and commercial opportunities to those described above for the Gypsy and Fairground communities.

31. New Travellers camp on a variety of sites with a range of legal statuses. While a significant proportion of families are on unauthorised sites, many stop temporarily or for longer periods, particularly during the winter months, on private land owned by the families themselves, friends or relatives. A very small number of New Travellers benefit from site provision made by local authorities in response to their previous duties under the 1968 Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act. This latter development has created some tensions between Gypsy Travellers and New Travellers. In common with all the other Travelling communities an increasing number of families are now travelling overseas, mainly for work purposes.

32. Although many New Travellers may have rejected the values of settled society and its formal educational processes, a majority of parents are anxious for their children to receive a 'sound' education. Many parents take on the responsibility themselves, while others are happy to place their children in local schools. In common with many Gypsy Travellers, access to formal school education can be hampered by migration, schools which are less than welcoming, residential isolation and a lack of the most basic facilities such as water and toilets.

33. There are relatively few Bargee families still living on the network of inland waterways in this country. The British Waterways Board reported in 1987 that there were only 115 houseboat mooring licences in the UK, but it is not known how many of these represent families travelling on working boats. Some may in fact be just houseboats moored fairly permanently in one location. The Board reported only 11 families with a total

of 17 school aged children. There is a long history surrounding the Bargee families and communities who worked the canal system and no doubt there were many similarities in circumstances to the other nomadic communities as detailed above. Of the families which remain, little is known of their current circumstances though experience in other countries with more substantial Bargee populations suggest that the children may remain largely outside the school system because of families' extreme mobility. Very few Bargee children are known to Traveller Education Services which may, in part, reflect their great mobility and "invisibility". It is reported by one TES that there are a small number of families living on sea-going coastal boats which travel between small harbours and ports on the south coast during the Summer months. Their numbers are not thought to be high and the education of any children concerned has not yet been raised as an issue.

34. Public reactions to nomadic communities have seldom been sympathetic and have more often been marked by fear, suspicion, hostility and social rejection. The severity of treatment both between the different groups and over the course of time, has however, varied considerably. The sixteenth century in particular witnessed severe persecution of the Gypsies. Genocidal legislation passed during Henry VII's reign banished Gypsies under pain of death and the same was to be suffered by any who helped or associated with them.

35. The fear and suspicion which nomadism often excites among settled populations, combined with a history in most European countries of repressive legislation has created an entrenched cultural divide between some of the nomadic communities and most of the settled population. This has often restricted Travellers' access to education and other public services including primary health care. The negative attitudes aroused are by no means confined to the settled population. Some Gypsies and New Travellers have a less than tolerant view of housedwellers. For a number of Gypsies an endemic sense of injustice has fostered resentful attitudes towards some other minority ethnic communities, despite the irony in some cases of a common ethnic and linguistic heritage. It is felt that newer immigrant communities have received acceptance and respect, as well as generous social provision, in a relatively short time. This underlines further the sense of injustice surrounding their own historic social rejection and persecution.

36. Within all the travelling communities the differences in wealth and income approximate to the profile of that which obtains for the settled population.

## **DEMOGRAPHY**

37. It is estimated by HMI on a variety of evidence that the total size of the nomadic communities in England is in the region of 90,000. The table below provides an estimated breakdown. It is to be noted that a significant number of Travellers of Irish heritage are included in the Gypsy Traveller category.

Gypsy Travellers	70,000
Fairground/Showpeople	10,500
Circuses	2,000
New Travellers	6,000
Bargees/Boat dwellers	500

38. It is impossible to estimate the number of people from the different communities who have settled into houses. A survey of a thousand Traveller families in one shire county revealed that in December 1993, 46% had been housed for longer than 2 years. This was a recorded increase of 10% on the previous year. Periodically a small percentage of Travelling families move both into and out of houses and this has been a common feature of most of the communities over many decades. It is estimated that the majority of Gypsy Travellers live in houses and have abandoned a nomadic lifestyle. In so doing, of course, they do not generally relinquish their ethnic identity and seldom abandon their cultural traditions.

39. Although the majority of Gypsy Travellers tend to live in the south of England, particularly in shire counties, it may well be the case that a larger proportion of those who live in the north are housedwellers, owing to the adverse climatic conditions.

40. The table at Appendix 2 gives the distribution of Gypsy Traveller caravans (known as Trailers to the community) in English local authorities (regions and counties).

41. Nearly all local authorities are visited by fairs and circuses. The distribution of winter quarters, however, does not reflect such a uniform pattern, although a majority of local authorities will have some form of winter base for a Fairground or Circus family group. New Travellers live more in southern regions, but there are New Traveller communities in many areas, including northern England. Again, climatic conditions may in part explain this differential pattern of settlement.

42. The Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) statistical returns from Section 210 annual reports indicate the total number of schools with Travelling children being supported. It is important to note that these totals only relate to schools receiving additional support for Travelling pupils and so do not therefore represent the total number of schools with Travelling pupils on roll.

### Number of schools being supported by Section 210 grant 1994-95

<b>LEA Schools</b>	
Primary	2,274
Middle	123
Secondary	645
Special	161
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,203</b>

<b>GM Schools</b>	
Primary	24
Middle	3
Secondary	92
Special	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>

43. In a majority of cases Travelling children attend the school nearest to the residential site or other stopping place. It is sometimes the case that parents from the same site will decide to send their children to different neighbouring schools. In some circumstances, particularly affecting Fairground families, children may be transported back to their base school on a daily basis, irrespective of the changed location of the Fairground. Despite this, the schools nearest to sites generally have the highest concentrations of Travelling pupils.

44. The location and size of sites varies considerably and includes urban, suburban and rural environments. Travelling children therefore attend schools in various settings with no particular concentrations, although approximately half of schools attended are based in urban areas, and in a number of these there is a significant proportion of pupils from different minority ethnic backgrounds. In small rural schools the Travelling children can make up a significant proportion of the total pupils on roll. The percentage of Travelling pupils in such schools can vary therefore from 1% to over 60%.

45. The most up-to-date statistics on the number of Travelling children are those provided by the DfEE as a result of the analysis of the annual reports written by the

recipient authorities of specific grants paid under Section 210 of the 1988 Education Reform Act. The reports for the year April 1994 to 1995 from 73 projects across 82 LEAs identified a total of 26,408 Travelling children aged between 5 and 16 years, residing in or resorting to the areas of these 82 LEAs. It is admitted in a number of the LEA reports that some of the totals are little better than estimates. The overall total, however, does not include those school-aged Travelling children who reside in or resort to the remaining 27 LEAs. The analysis of annual reports by the DfEE further revealed an additional pre-school 0-5 cohort of 6,669 children across 81 LEAs. Some LEAs with sizeable numbers admit to the possibility of there being additional Travelling children resorting to their districts, but circumstances had prevented official involvement of the local Traveller Education Service. The DFEE statistics suggest that some LEA reports represent an underestimate on account of figures only being supplied for children receiving direct support from a TES. As a result of these exceptions and uncertainties in the statistics, it is likely that the number of Travelling children is much higher than the current totals suggest. It may well be that the Travelling 0-16 child population in England only is nearer to 50,000. It is to be remembered that this total does not necessarily include the considerable numbers of Traveller families who have been settled in houses for over two years.

## **STANDARDS, RESPONSE TO EDUCATIONAL PROVISION, BEHAVIOUR AND ATTENDANCE**

### **STANDARDS**

46. There is no separate systematic and unified recording of the standards achieved by Travelling pupils at the end of each Key Stage. The standards of achievement reported below relate to the available evidence gathered during inspection.

47. For a majority of Travelling children who are regular school attenders at Key Stage 1, there is evidence from inspection and SATs results that the standards achieved are generally sound in relation to age-related national expectations and appropriate for their abilities. However, this generally sound start is not wholly maintained in Key Stage 2, where there is considerable variation. In particular, about a half of Travelling pupils, especially those with Gypsy Traveller backgrounds, begin to demonstrate a level of weakness in basic language skills that undermines their achievement across many of the National Curriculum subjects. Concern is expressed by some TES that even after unbroken participation in primary education, a worrying number of Travelling pupils are still leaving their primary schools at the end of Key Stage 2 with levels of achievement which are well below average national age-related expectations and unsatisfactory for their abilities. This phenomenon is again mainly confined to Gypsy Traveller pupils. The age at which pupils have started school; the opportunities for pre-school experiences; the regularity of attendance; the migration pattern of particular families or groups and the extent to which particular communities are subject to prejudiced attitudes, are key factors in these disturbing assessments.

48. It is estimated that only between 15% and 20% of Traveller pupils are registered, or in regular attendance, at Key Stage 3. Levels of achievement at this Key Stage are more generally depressed than in earlier Key Stages, with a significant number of pupils requiring additional help from either learning support teachers or staff attached to TES. Generally, despite notable exceptions, standards of achievement are well below national age-related expectations and the pupils' abilities. It is less common for Travelling pupils at this Key Stage to be able to learn and operate independently in school, although there is a growing number of pupils in this category from all groups, but particularly Fairground families, who can.

49. The number of pupils who continue to Key Stage 4 shows a further significant decline to an estimated 5% of the secondary cohort. Some of the pupils perform satisfactorily, but although no specific examination statistics are available, most schools report only very modest results at GCSE for Travelling pupils. The exception to this picture of regular attendance and sound achievement, albeit modest, is provided by those Travelling pupils who are attending spasmodically at Key Stage 4 and who receive little benefit from attending school because of a previous poor record of attendance and the lack of a sound grounding in basic skills. Many, but not all, of these pupils are of Gypsy Traveller background and are attending secondary schools because of their long settled residence on permanent sites and the persistent efforts by EWOs.

50. Few Travelling pupils continue in education after the age of 16. The DfEE in its analysis of Section 210 annual reports for 1993/94 has identified 448 students from Traveller communities known to be on access courses, although surprisingly a majority of these were within one LEA. The remaining 24 were spread across six LEAs. A further 122 students across 17 projects (up to 26 LEAs) were reported as benefiting from adult basic education. One hundred and two Travelling students were recorded as being on vocational courses, and a further 18 involved in further education. Only three Travellers were reported as participating in higher education. These figures are extremely disappointing and raise important issues surrounding post-16 access to vocational training and further and higher education. They further draw attention to the need for improving the standards of achievement at all Key Stages to provide sufficient skills and confidence to maintain interest and contact with post-16 educational and vocational opportunities.

## RESPONSE TO EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

51. In general, provided they are appropriately received by the schools, Travelling pupils respond very positively to the education they receive, particularly in the primary phase, so long as the work is relevant, interesting and challenging. In the main they work productively both as individuals or in small groups, and make satisfactory progress in mathematics, science and technology. In other subjects their progress is impeded by their relative lack of language skills, particularly literacy. This is an issue of which schools and TES are aware and are addressing, though not sufficiently successfully.

52. The response to school of Travelling pupils is crucially influenced by the Travelling children's awareness of the level of their acceptance by teachers and other pupils. Where the presence of Travelling children is openly acknowledged, and where accurate and positive images of the different nomadic communities are featured within both the resources of the school and the curriculum, then the response is lively and there is a genuine openness to learning. In contrast, where the ethos of the school implicitly or explicitly suggests that Travelling pupils are best served by an incognito status, and this is particularly so for Gypsies and New Travellers, the response lacks confidence, is tentative and reserved. This situation can also lead to behaviour difficulties. Travelling pupils appear to achieve higher standards in schools which place great emphasis on equality of opportunity and by encouraging the acceptance of cultural and ethnic diversity, establish an ethos which fosters self-esteem and pride in individual and group identity. Such a philosophy manifests itself through both the formal and informal curriculum and it is clear from inspection that many schools have been significantly helped in this process by the work of TES which have provided the skills, information and resources to facilitate the sensitive inclusion of the different cultures and minority ethnic backgrounds which make up the Travelling communities. Where this is done well it has helped to improve the quality of learning and accuracy of knowledge for all pupils.



## **BEHAVIOUR**

53. The standards of behaviour of Travelling pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2 are generally good. Most schools reported positively on the response by Travelling pupils to school rules, including uniform requirements. Many schools commented on the high standards of personal hygiene and dress achieved by Travelling pupils. Some schools, which admitted to anxiety prior to the admission of Gypsy and New Traveller pupils, expressed surprise at the polite and calm dignity of the children and in retrospect had been more alarmed by the prejudiced attitudes and behaviour revealed by some of their non-Travelling pupils and parents. Irrespective of any initial concerns, most schools valued the presence of Travelling children and lamented when they moved on. A significant number of headteachers said the children brought a freshness to the school, a new dimension which stimulated both professional ideas and practice. The schools with the most positive attitudes towards the Travelling pupils were characterised by a genuine acceptance and respect for their cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They were also the schools most likely to identify and appreciate the advantages and opportunities offered by these pupils. The very small number of schools which expressed doubts were frequently those which had been insufficiently briefed on the background and circumstances of the Travelling children. In the absence of sufficient information the behaviour and responses of Travelling pupils were occasionally misinterpreted, as, for example, where older siblings, unaware of invisible infant/junior playground boundaries, would wish to see and protect the younger ones by playing in their area. Some Travelling children, particularly Gypsies and New Travellers, have a natural spontaneity and curiosity occasionally unrestrained by generally accepted social conventions. They may also relate to adults in an unusually mature way which does not always recognise differences in age and status. In these situations behaviour can often be misjudged as rudeness or indiscipline.

54. While most Travelling pupils in secondary schools behave well, too many, particularly Gypsies, are excluded either at Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4. These instances of exclusion are reported to result usually from disruptive outbursts arising out of the frustration engendered by under-achievement or racial abuse from other pupils.

55. In many of these cases the schools often mismanage both the negative behaviour of the non-Traveller pupils and the Travellers' responses. It is important that schools have effective policies providing guidance on dealing with racist incidents such as name-calling and bullying. Ideally, the whole staff, teaching and non-teaching, should participate in appropriate awareness raising in-service training before Travelling pupils arrive, to enable the school to respond positively and appropriately to their needs.

## **ATTENDANCE**

56. The overall level of attendance of Travelling pupils at school is significantly better than even a few years ago. In relative terms, however, the overall average attendance is

unsatisfactory. Marked variations are identifiable between individuals, families and groups. Many different circumstances contribute to the unsatisfactory patterns of attendance. The HMI report published in 1983, "The Education of Travellers' Children" <sup>7</sup> stated that of the 40-50% of Travelling children thought to be registered with schools, only a small proportion were attending regularly. Although the number of Travelling children registered with schools has increased substantially in the last 10 years, there is still a marked contrast between the total number of Travelling pupil registrations and those attending on a regular basis (see Appendix 3).

57. The special position of Travelling families in regard to school attendance is recognised by Section 199(6) of the 1993 Education Act. This protects Traveller parents from prosecution if it can be demonstrated that they are engaged in a trade or business of such nature as requires them to travel from place to place; that the child has attended at a school as a registered pupil as regularly as the nature of that trade or business permits; and that children over six years of age have attended school for a minimum of 200 sessions (half days), over a one year period. The aim, however, should always be for the child to attend school as often as possible - 200 attendances should not be regarded as a norm. As referred to above, the purpose of this section of the Act is to protect Travelling parents from unreasonable prosecution for the non-attendance of their children at school. It does not mean that part-time education for Travelling children is legally acceptable, nor does it relieve parents of their duties under section 36 of the 1944 Education Act, to ensure that children are receiving suitable education when not at school. From the inspection evidence it is clear that significant numbers of Travelling pupils in all the Traveller communities fail to achieve levels of attendance which meet the legal requirements. Poor attendance undermines educational achievements and efforts to maintain and improve the attendance of Travelling children must be a matter of high priority for all concerned, including parents, not all of whom accord to attendance at school the importance it deserves.

## **ACCESS**

### **OBSTACLES**

58. Among the chief obstacles to access and regular attendance is the nomadic lifestyle of most of the families concerned. The education system is naturally designed to meet the needs of a static population. Attending many different schools for short periods can undermine educational progress, and in some cases, even the motivation to attend. For many Gypsy and New Travellers, the situation has been exacerbated by involuntary movement in consequence of evictions from unauthorised land. Apart from the obvious mismatch of settled schooling and a nomadic way of life, many Travelling families, particularly Gypsies and New Travellers, harbour fears and anxieties about their children

---

<sup>7</sup> "The Education of Travellers' Children" An HMI discussion paper. HMSO 1983.

attending school. Most Travelling parents like all other parents, are anxious that their children be happy at school. Even for some Fairground and Circus families, there is a justified concern that their children will not be disadvantaged or upset by constantly changing school. Unfamiliarity with the culture and expectations of schools may act as a further hindrance to access. For some families school attendance is a low priority. The lack of school places within reasonable distance from sites and other stopping places is a further significant hindrance to access for many children. In addition to transport difficulties some families are deterred by the strict uniform requirements of some schools.

## **RESPONSE STRATEGIES**

### **POLICIES**

59. The Education Act 1944, as amended by the Education Act 1993, places LEAs under a duty to make education available for all school-aged children in their area, appropriate to their age, abilities and aptitudes and any special educational needs they may have. This duty extends to all children residing in their area, whether permanently or temporarily. It thus embraces in particular Travelling children.<sup>8</sup> In most of the Section 210 funded projects run by the LEAs, practice is based on a published policy document. The key principles of ensuring unhindered access to, and full integration in mainstream education are enshrined in these policy statements.

60. Most of these statements are complementary to, and conditioned by, the authority's policy on equal opportunities. The most effective policy statements are those that, in addition to laying down basic principles of access, also provide detailed guidelines for encouraging the implementation of good practice. Such documents provide a clear message to all educational establishments in a LEA about the needs and rights of Travelling children. They are also helpful in raising awareness, giving practical professional advice and publicising the existence and work of the LEA's own Traveller Education Service.

### **FUNDING**

61. The Education (Grants) (Travellers and Displaced Persons) Regulations 1990 (now replaced by the 1993 Regulations as amended from April 1995), established under Section 210 of the 1988 Education Reform Act, empower the Secretary of State to pay grant to LEAs in support of expenditure to promote and facilitate the education of Travellers irrespective of age. It is to be noted that there are separate Section 210 programmes in England and Wales. (Detailed guidance on the operation of the programme is contained in DFE Circulars 10/90 and 11/92 and a guidance letter which the DfEE sent to all projects on 19 May 1995.)

---

<sup>8</sup> DES Circular 1/81 "Education Act 1980: Admission to Schools, Appeals, Publication of Information and School Attendance Orders (Section 6-11 and Schedule 2)".

62. In 1990 the Department of Education and Science issued Circular 10/90 related to Section 210 Funding. There was contained in Part B of this Circular, a clear statement that Section 210 grants "must ... be aimed at ensuring unhindered access to, and full integration in mainstream education". (Part B was carried forward to Circular 11/92.)

63. LEAs receive allowance in their revenue support grant to meet the basic educational needs of Travelling pupils at school in the same way and at the same rate as for other pupils. In addition, where LEAs are making extra provision to meet the particular educational needs of Travelling pupils, and are incurring **additional** expenditure in so doing, they may apply for funding from Section 210 grant, which is directly administered by DfEE. Grant is currently payable at a 65% grant rate. It is possible under the grant regulations for LEAs to cooperate by establishing consortium working. There are three such consortia arrangements, one involving 10 LEAs, another with four and one with two LEAs.

64. The greater part of Section 210 funding is used to employ project coordinators (with a minimum teaching commitment of 50%), peripatetic and school-based teachers, classroom assistants and specialist education welfare officers (the latter defined by a number of terms - eg Home/School Liaison Officers) . Other agreed expenditure includes books and equipment, staff and pupil transport, and uniform and boarding grants. The current major part of expenditure supports the employment of 351 teachers, over 170 classroom assistants and 54 specialist EWOs, (FTE approximately 410 posts). A number of LEAs provide additional funding to Traveller Education Services from their own resources at the 100% rate, although the extent and volume of such support is rapidly decreasing as a result of general financial pressures on LEAs. Section 210 projects vary considerably in size from a large county project with expenditure nearly totalling £500,000, to small metropolitan authorities with budgets between £12,500 and £25,000.

65. In a number of LEAs additional sources of central funding programmes have been used to a very modest level to supplement the educational provision mainly funded under Section 210. These include grants under Section 11 of the 1966 Local Government Act, Grants for Education Support and Training (GEST) programmes, grants paid through the Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit (ALBSU), and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). Small sums have also been paid to some projects by the European Commission for innovative work.

## **MANAGEMENT**

66. The quality of the management of Section 210 projects is generally satisfactory. The most successful projects have a management structure which places operational control with a project coordinator who has parity of status with similar service coordinators within the authority. The coordinators are best placed to decide on the deployment of staff

and other resources and the schools which need support. When the coordinator is directly responsible to a senior education officer important decisions can sometimes be reached more quickly. Many coordinators value the professional support they receive from a senior adviser or inspector. In a small number of cases LEAs have mounted formal inspections of their Traveller services and published reports. This is a welcome development which should improve the overall quality of project management.

67. Generally, the most efficient model of staff deployment is one which maintains a team of peripatetic teachers, and in some cases, classroom assistants. This allows staff to move between schools in response to changing needs and provides for a necessary flexibility which can respond to contingency demands generated, for example, by a new group of Travellers moving into the LEA area.

68. The more successful projects have a set of approved, shared and comprehensive objectives with detailed strategies for implementation. Projects with detailed and careful planning incorporate forecasts on the resources and in-service training needed to achieve the objectives, together with time related targets, performance indicators and an effective system of monitoring, evaluation and review.

69. Effective management also ensures a structure and programme of in-service training for the TES team itself. The best practice included, and successfully balanced, both service and individual professional needs. Some valuable in-service training is provided at regular intervals by professional associations and some voluntary organisations.

70. The quality of support to schools is the vital element of effective and efficient service delivery. Good management in this area of work depends on schools knowing clearly the philosophy underpinning Section 210 grants and the nature and type of support which might be expected from the TES. Schools need to be fully aware of the criteria for support and the procedures for contracting such support. Support agreements need to be based on joint assessment, agreed time related objectives and joint review.

71. Effective management takes the initiative in establishing inter-agency liaison, in fostering good professional and public relations, and last but not least, providing advice, information and support to Travelling families on education. Effective projects need administrative back-up with facilities and equipment which enables the coordinator to maintain appropriate records and conduct the efficient administration of the service.

72. The characteristics of good management within schools which have Travelling pupils on roll include:

a serious commitment to meet the educational needs of all pupils including Travelling pupils, recognised within a school equal opportunities policy and the

School Development Plan;

the recognition that the educational responsibility for the pupils rests not with the TES, but with the school in general and the classroom teacher in particular;

taking seriously the need to involve parents in partnership, and having a realistic notion of what this involves;

TES support is viewed as a partnership in which policy and practice are shared;

the implementation of administrative structures which try to ensure continuity of education by the promotion of record card procedures and the provision where necessary of distance learning packs;

the acquisition of appropriate resources and information to facilitate curriculum developments which would include positive images of the Travelling communities.

#### **OUTREACH TO FAMILIES AND SCHOOLS**

73. Outreach work to the different Travelling communities is well established practice in three-quarters of the projects visited. There appears to be a direct link between the level of positive community liaison and the levels of registrations and patterns of attendance.

74. Inspection identified a wide range of innovative practice in ensuring access to schools for Travelling children. The most effective strategies depend on the establishment of structures which provide coordinated support and information about the type, location and movement of Travelling families. Close liaison is needed between all those with responsibilities for nomadic communities and this will usually include the TES, other local authority departments, especially those responsible for site provision and the issuing of licences for Fairs and Circuses, and regional bodies including community health services.

#### **The Work of EWOs**

75. Outreach work to Travelling communities is a vital element in the process of building up a detailed knowledge of the number of school-aged children, as well as the development of trusting relationships with the communities. The outreach work is conducted either by peripatetic teachers or EWOs. A small number of headteachers have been involved in this work and such practice is usually very productive in confirming the welcoming attitude of the school, as a statement of concern about the children and a mark of respect for the community as a whole. Visits to families provide an opportunity to reassure parents about the social and physical safety of their children when at school, about the relevance and suitability of what the children are being taught and also to be able to explain about the expectations and routines of the school generally.

76. Just over half of projects have EWOs who are specialists working mainly within a TES. While there is a variety of practice in their titles and the designated responsibilities for outreach activities, approximately 80% of the work is effective and always involves close liaison between specialists, teachers, schools and EWOs working with the main LEA welfare service. In over half of the TES visited, either with or without specialist EWOs, a key factor in the development of good practice is the extent to which main LEA welfare services respond, or are encouraged to respond, to their legal responsibilities for Travelling children. The intensity of some Travelling pupil casework is often more than can be facilitated within the constraints of available resources and, in these circumstances, the specialist appointments under Section 210, can be a helpful catalyst to both the development of a broadened professional perspective by LEA welfare services and improved access as a result of their direct work with Travelling pupils.

### **Traveller Education Services**

77. Traveller Education Services use a range of strategies to encourage and enforce regular patterns of school attendance. A key element in successful practice is the establishment and maintenance of trusting relationships with individual families and a willingness to understand and appreciate the varied circumstances which militate against regular attendance at school. This work is time-consuming and the additional involvement and vigilant support of both schools and statutory agencies is necessary. Ready and easy communications with parents are a further aspect of good practice. In these circumstances there is a growing trend towards Travelling parents notifying the school about an impending move and thus facilitating opportunities for the gathering of information about when a family might return; the provision of distance learning materials; ensuring that the family is in possession of updated DfEE Record Transfer 'Green Cards' (see below); and liaison with colleagues and schools in the area to which the family may move.

78. It is important that LEAs treat Travelling families in the same way as all other families in regard to the non-attendance of their children at school. Education Welfare Services need to implement the same policies based on the same legal requirements, but with due regard to the need for sensitivity. Contracts, individually negotiated, for part-time attendance at school, (when full-time attendance is not feasible), are reported to be a helpful measure in some limited circumstances and one which may lead to eventual full-time integration in mainstream schooling. Strategies of this nature, together with other forms of alternative provision cannot, however, be seen as a legal or satisfactory alternative to full-time attendance at school. Alternative provision, unless it is part of LEA provision otherwise than at school (1993 Education Act), is unacceptable and might be viewed for some children as discriminatory under the 1976 Race Relations Act.

79. Some TES are successful in encouraging schools to keep places open for Travelling pupils who may migrate away from the area of the school for significant periods during the

school year. Such arrangements are a very direct benefit, particularly to children from Fairground and Circus families, who may be away from a winter-base school for many months during the Spring, Summer and Autumn terms.

80. Access to education is increasingly achieved for Travelling children on their parents' own initiative. Although this has been a tradition in some families within all the communities, the knowledge about rights and duties in regard to education is actively promoted by TES and there is evidence of a growing confidence which enables many families to gain admission to schools independently. Two further developments of policy have been shown to be beneficial in promoting independent access. Directories or contact booklets containing essential educational information for Travelling parents are widely circulated. These allow many families who travel to seek the advice and support of local TES with regard to available school places and registration. In 1992 the DfEE introduced the Record Reference 'Green Card' for Travelling pupils. This card is given to Travelling parents for each of their school-aged children and every time they register with a school the card is stamped with the school's name and address. This enables the next school to obtain the child's educational records more speedily than would otherwise be the case. Some TES have introduced a system of educational records which travel with the pupil and some of the records which are held centrally when the children move between schools.

81. In fostering the development of independence by families in seeking admission to schools, many TES plan and provide in-service training for schools. The aim is to raise awareness of the range of difficulties which many Travelling families face in gaining access to education. This training valuably encourages schools to respond to Travelling parents and their children in the same way as all other families and to ensure that admission procedures are in keeping with legal requirements. Where it is possible, the benefits of this training are extended to non-teaching staff. The friendly and welcoming ethos of a school needs to be exemplified by all staff, and particularly those who have the first point of contact with the public. In a number of instances it was noted that some schools, often with the support of TES, had also found it necessary to talk to parents and governors to enlist their support for an appropriate response to new pupils and avoid the manifestations of any prejudiced attitudes which might exist. Preparing the ground can also be effective pastoral care as in the case where Year 7 pupils in their first term at secondary school sent letters of welcome with photographs of themselves and the school to some new pupils who had yet to join their peers because they were still involved with the Fairground travelling season.

82. Practical constraints can sometimes be a hindrance to access; transport and school uniform appear from inspection to be the most common. In recognition of these needs many TES provide school transport which is effective in facilitating access and establishing patterns of regular school attendance. In a significant number of cases, however, Travelling parents convey their own children to and from school. A growing number of schools now insist on uniform for all pupils. In the main Travelling parents are able to



provide uniform, but in a small number of cases TES are able to help, particularly with the difficulties experienced by families who move frequently between different schools. Uniform grants are eligible under Section 210 in addition to those provided at local level.

### **Education Otherwise than at School**

83. In a number of individual cases it is judged by a TES that access to school and full integration is not in the immediate best interests of the child concerned. At secondary school level particularly, a previous lack of primary schooling combined with a fearful and anti-school attitude can create circumstances where mobile provision or home tuition is seen as the most appropriate form of education. Where this is the case, such provision is generally viewed by the TES as a first step to full-time participation in school. It is important, however, that the pupil is registered with a school and that the programmes of study are prepared in liaison with the school staff and are geared to facilitating eventual full integration. Such provision should also be seen in the context of the assessment of individuals, and not groups, and come within the authority's developed policy for provision otherwise than at school as prescribed under the 1993 Education Act.

84. In many LEAs it is reported that a growing number of Travelling parents are opting for parental education otherwise than at school, and taking on the responsibility for their own children's education (1944 Education Act, Section 36). In cases where parents feel unable to perform this task, part-time teachers or tutors are being employed to provide tuition. LEAs have a duty to make assessments of the adequacy of such provision.

### **Special Educational Needs**

85. Travelling children who have clearly identifiable physical, sensory and learning disabilities, are more likely to have access to schools when they are settled on permanent sites and are resident for the greater part of the school year. The early identification and assessment of any special educational needs (SEN) are vital to ensure that a statement can be issued as soon as possible, where this is necessary, and an appropriate school placement found. There are, however, major obstacles of access to appropriate support and school provision for many Travelling pupils with SEN, when families maintain a nomadic lifestyle either by choice or duress. Opportunities for the stages of identification, assessment, statementing and review of these children's needs are seriously put at risk if their movements are frequent and they cross from one LEA to another. As a result there are many Travelling children with special needs who are not getting the appropriate level of support. To mitigate some of these difficulties, best practice aims for continuity of support which relies on inter-agency cooperation, the maintenance of supportive liaison with the families involved and effective use of professional networks which have been built up regionally, and to some extent nationally, by TES. In some cases these established structures are effective in reducing discontinuity and maintaining school attendance and appropriate levels of support. It is to be noted that where a Travelling child is the subject of

the statementing process and where the stages cannot be completed by the time the child moves, then the six month period can be extended in order for the process to be completed when the child returns to the LEA. In these cases a special exemption can apply under Regulations 11(6)(e) of the 1994 SEN Regulations which can recognise "exceptional personal circumstances affecting the child or his parents". It is also possible for flexibility to be introduced into the annual statement review arrangements.

## **Pre-school Education**

86. Travelling children have less access to pre-school education than the non-Travelling population. Although there are variations both within and between LEAs, the average participation rate for Travelling children in nursery, playgroup or other under-five provision is approximately 20%. A majority of the TES inspected reported an improving participation rate, but a number of obstacles still exist. Pre-school provision is a legitimate category for Section 210 application. However, because the available funds have been heavily over-subscribed, relatively few projects have been able to be supported for this type of work because priority hitherto has been given to compulsory school age children. A number of projects have been successful in introducing Travelling children to local nursery classes and sometimes to local playgroups. However, part-time places can frequently create problems especially if both parents are working and mid-day transport is not available. In a small number of areas the opportunities for pre-school places are very limited and when this is combined with the isolated location of a site, successful provision is often made by the use of mobile units. Within some Gypsy and Travelling families there has been traditionally a reluctance to place young children into formal educational settings. Where TES actively encourage parents to appreciate the benefits of early years education, attitudes are slowly changing with parents having a more positive and less anxious view of education at this stage. Provision which now fosters a higher level of participation in pre-school education should be seen as a priority.

## **QUALITY OF TEACHING AND SUPPORT**

87. The quality of teaching within classrooms varies but a growing majority of classroom teachers have a welcoming attitude to Travelling pupils and show interest and concern. Travelling pupils are mostly integrated and provided with appropriately differentiated work in response to reasonably sound assessment of individual needs. Some teachers, however, are too quick to request support from the TES and withdrawal of pupils from the classroom. The quality of teaching and classroom support provided by TES is generally good. In the main, specialist teachers and classroom assistants provide an example of high professional commitment and concern. The effectiveness of liaison between classroom and specialist teachers and assistants varies, but is mainly influenced by time constraints. Most specialist support is provided within the classroom context. The quality of TES support teaching is generally sound or better. The support work is well planned and learning objectives have been carefully identified and usually agreed with the class

teacher. A range of teaching strategies are productively employed and there is generally good management of time. Support teaching is well targeted and organised. Relationships are excellent and this acts as a powerful motivator to the Travelling pupils by providing learning support, confidence and a sense of security.

88. A growing number of classroom teachers have an increasing awareness of the distinctive backgrounds of Travelling pupils. Specialist support teaching is generally effective in ensuring that the needs of these pupils are given appropriate attention. Such work is best achieved where there is joint or partnership teaching.

89. Most TES have devoted considerable time and effort to collecting and developing specialist resources to support in-service training with schools, curriculum development work in the classroom and individual pupil learning support. Although a majority of TES have built up impressive resource centres, it is not always the case that schools are fully aware of the range, sources and availability of such resources. Even in some schools with a substantial percentage of Travelling pupils on roll, the library will seldom have more than one or two books which provide accurate information and positive images of Travelling backgrounds. A number of TES have usefully produced resource catalogues or loan collections for schools and this is effective in raising awareness, in providing opportunities for augmenting book stocks and other resources, and in facilitating curriculum development work. In some cases this has led to the publication of books and teaching materials which are of general benefit to the resources of any school.

90. The achievement of Travelling pupils is enhanced by TES working in close partnership with schools to ensure that Travelling children receive a broad and balanced curriculum, including the NC. Some schools, frequently with the support of the TES, have developed procedures and documents for establishing baseline assessments. This is helpful in knowing what a particular child has already achieved and also in monitoring progress in relation to individual programmes of work and associated targets. Intensive remedial support, including reading recovery techniques, provide an effective means of gaining access to the curriculum for Travelling children who may have been late starters at school or who may have had an interrupted educational record.

91. As has been said, discontinuity in educational experience undermines achievement. To minimise the effects of this, many schools, with the support of TES, have developed strategies of maintaining pastoral and curriculum contact with pupils who travel for periods during the school year. Distance learning packs are now a growing aspect of a school's provision for Travelling pupils and especially those with regular and predictable patterns of movement as is common with most Fairground families for example. In the interests of pupil motivation some TES have developed the practice of awarding certificates to pupils who have successfully completed their distance learning packs during the travelling season. Although distance learning cannot be seen as a viable alternative to school, it is proving a successful form of provision in maintaining continuity and giving a support to

parents who have the responsibility for providing the education of their children for sessions when they may not be in school owing to travelling. (See section on attendance above.)

92. The continuity of the curriculum is sometimes broken because some Travelling parents do not allow their children to go on school trips and educational visits. Most schools reported a positive change of attitude in this respect, but it is still an area which causes concern. Success frequently depends on the school developing trusting relationships with the Travelling families and inviting parents to accompany the staff and pupils on the trip. The level of participation in residential experiences is still reported to be small.

93. In a very small number of cases Travelling pupils' achievements have been enhanced by a dual approach which focuses on improving literacy skills within the family as a whole. Such work, which has more generally been confined to Gypsy Travellers, is effective in instilling in parents a greater degree of confidence to participate in, and contribute to, their children's education.

94. The quality of assessment of Travelling pupils varies, but is generally sound and used to influence individual programmes of support. Where there are well established TES who work closely with teachers and schools, the assessments are more likely to be related to individually diagnosed learning needs and difficulties, rather than to definitions based on stereotypical perceptions. Under the guidance provided within the Code of Practice in relation to pupils who are identified as having such needs, many TES are now more appropriately involved with Travelling pupils at stage three in the process.

95. Previous reference has been made to the importance of well targeted in-service training for the staff of schools. In addition to that which is focused on raising awareness of the issues, TES also contribute towards direct in-service provision for a wide range of clients. This frequently involves education and other departments of the same authority, outside agencies and other forums which may include the police, health workers and teacher trainers. The quality of this in-service training is generally good.

## **ISSUES**

96. In the last 10 or more years significant progress has been made in the development of policies by both central government and LEAs to secure Travelling children unhindered access to schools, patterns of regular attendance and satisfactory levels of achievement. This work has not only established the development of trusting relationships with many families in the different Travelling communities, but at the same time helped to identify the extent of need and the number of children involved. These essential first steps have led to wide improvements in the situation. Very considerable progress has been made in the development of welcoming and positive attitudes on the part of schools to the needs of

Travelling children from the different communities. Patterns of registration and attendance show a marked improvement with those which obtained only a few years ago.

97. Inspection evidence suggests that difficulties and hindrances to access can be overcome if two essential elements of policy are present. First, the need for affirmative statements enshrined in legislation which outlaw discrimination and ensure educational and curriculum entitlements. This broader framework is vital if practical grass roots policies are to be effective. Such statements are in place. Secondly, there is the need for the development of a range of strategies to address and try to undo the complex web of reasons underpinning obstacles to access. While most of these concern the need for practical and innovative responses, there is still the need to raise awareness and modify professional perspectives. These approaches are firmly established in Section 210 projects.

98. Although the overall data on standards of achievement is only partial, it suggests that there is a gradual improvement, particularly at Key Stage 1, and, to a lesser extent, at Key Stage 2. These achievements have resulted from the effective and efficient management of Section 210 funding both at central and local level. The grant system represents good value for money despite the extent of unmet needs and the remaining areas for much needed developments. Nevertheless, much remains to be done. Travelling pupils do not on the whole maintain the good start made in Key Stage 1. They are entitled, like all other children, to an education that affords them the opportunity of continuous progression through the National Curriculum. By the age of 14, however, this is for too many at best a distant aspiration.

99. A nomadic lifestyle inevitably creates practical difficulties for access to schools. Not all groups within the Travelling communities have historically been subject to prejudice or hostility. Nevertheless, even they often have to overcome difficulties that stem from the fact that they do not live a settled life. It is, however, unacceptable that access for some Travelling children should be further hampered by open or hidden prejudice within the wider community or among Travellers themselves. It is perhaps ironic that while there is evidence of growing understanding and positive attitudes towards Travelling children in most schools, there are still many Gypsy and New Traveller families who harbour both anxiety and resistance towards education.

100. Travelling children cannot be decently educated for the most part unless they attend school regularly. The evidence is that while the general situation is slowly improving, there are still too many children in these communities who fail to attend regularly and to acceptable and legal requirements. Many TES commented on the dilemmas posed by poor attendance. Encouraging or enforcing better attendance is, however, not a simple matter. The DfEE has provided some helpful guidance on these issues. The relevant publication on School Attendance comments:

"In general, the aim should always be to ensure that Travelling children, in common with all other children, attend school as regularly and as frequently as possible - 200 attendances should not be regarded as a norm. A difficult balance has to be struck between, on the one hand, the need for action in individual cases in the interests of the child and, on the other, adopting a sensitive and sympathetic approach which recognises the lifestyle and cultural traditions of the family concerned."<sup>9</sup>

101. This inspection report provides evidence of encouraging and improving levels of achievement by many Travelling pupils. The picture is, of course, variable and inextricably related to the issues of access and attendance. There is, however, also significant and unexplained underachievement by a worrying number of Travelling pupils, particularly those from Gypsy Traveller backgrounds. There are some serious issues raised by this finding which justify research and analysis. Clearly an area for investigation is the impact on pupils' progress of the particular ethnic and social relationships which exist between some of these minority communities and the mainstream settled society. The current standards of achievement are overall unsatisfactory and leave little room for complacency.

102. The advancements made in the provision for Travelling children are significant and demonstrate the success of the central funding programme under Section 210. However, these achievements need to be assessed in the wider context of the extent of unmet needs and the appreciation, based on experience, that progress is relatively slow because it is essentially about changing deep rooted attitudes. It is to be remembered that a majority of the children from the different Travelling Communities are not receiving their full entitlement to the National Curriculum. The advancements made therefore should not lessen the resolve to continue to address the significant levels of unmet need and the relatively poor and frequently disappointing achievements in access and attendance, particularly at secondary school, and in individual pupil success. There is clearly still a great deal to be achieved which will require the continued commitment of all those concerned for a number of years to come.

---

<sup>9</sup> "School Attendance" Policy and Practice on Categorisation of Absence, DFE May 1994.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **LEAS VISITED BY HMI BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 1992 AND JULY 1995**

Barking	Hackney	Oldham
Bolton	Havering	Redbridge
Cambridgeshire	Hertfordshire	Rotherham
Camden	Kent	Southwark
Cornwall	Kensington and Chelsea	Surrey
Cumbria	Manchester	Tameside
Devon	Newcastle Upon Tyne	Tower Hamlets
Durham	Newham	Wakefield
Ealing	Norfolk	
Essex	Northumberland	
Greenwich	Northamptonshire	
	North Yorkshire	

A number of other LEAs were visited briefly during the period of inspection and evidence is also drawn from these visits.

## APPENDIX 2

### DoE STATISTICAL RETURNS - JANUARY 1995

**The distribution of Gypsy Traveller caravans in English local authorities (regions and counties).**

Greater London	799	Berkshire	229
East Sussex	74	Hampshire	195
Kent	518	Oxfordshire	277
Surrey	560	West Sussex	187
Bedfordshire	156	Buckinghamshire	286
Cambridgeshire	779	Essex	677
Hertfordshire	336	Norfolk	313
Suffolk	257	Avon	199
Cornwall	192	Devon	155
Dorset	132	Gloucestershire	213
Somerset	229	Wiltshire	198
Derbyshire	79	Leicestershire	249
Lincolnshire	162	Northamptonshire	242
Nottinghamshire	185	Shropshire	298
Hereford and Worcester	547	Staffordshire	308
Warwickshire	248	West Midlands	356
Cheshire	248	Cumbria	126
Greater Manchester	306	Lancashire	272
Merseyside	131	Humberside	234
North Yorkshire	264	South Yorkshire	462
West Yorkshire	435	Cleveland	77
Durham	235	Northumberland	36



**APPENDIX 3****Number of school aged Travelling pupils and those registered/attending school:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Status/source</b>	<b>Total numbers</b>	<b>Numbers registered</b>	<b>% of cohort</b>	<b>% regular attendance</b>
1970	Estimate	12,000	1,500 <sup>10</sup>	12.5	33
1983	Estimate	15,000	6,750 <sup>11</sup>	45	20
1994/95	DfEE statistics (82 LEAs)	26,408	16,124	61.05	Not available

The level of registrations for 1993/94 was recorded as 14,321 (56% of cohort) and represents an increase over one year of nearly 13%.

These figures do not necessarily take account of short stay influxes, complicated seasonal patterns of attendance and double counting. "Attending regularly" is interpreted for the purposes of this report as above 80% of possible attendances.

The most recent information provided by the DfEE (on the basis of returns from 69 projects across 78 LEAs) usefully provides data on Traveller pupil attendance with the comparisons for the years 1993/94 and 1994/95.

---

<sup>10</sup> "The Education of Travelling Children" C Reiss, Schools Council Research Studies. 1975 .

<sup>11</sup> "The Education of Travellers' Children" op. cit., Footnote 3.

	1993-94	1994-95	% difference	Average Pupil Attendance 94/95	% Attendance
Primary					
Pupils	10,259	11,668	+14	157	41.3
Sessions	1,557,230	1,827,669	+17		
Middle					
Pupils	357	426	+19	165	43.4
Sessions	52,400	70,349	+34		
Secondary					
Pupils	1,969	2,378	+21	171	45
Sessions	274,430	407,129	+48		
Special					
Pupils	267	294	+10	157	41.3
Sessions	36,760	46,151	+26		
TOTAL					
Pupils	12,852	14,766	+15	159	41.8
Sessions	1,920,820	2,351,298	+22		

The information on attendance of Travelling pupils, gathered during the period of inspection, provides some tentative but useful qualification to the average figures above. Approximately half of Travelling pupils enrolled at primary schools have an attendance rate above 80%. One-third have a rate between 50% and 79%, with approximately one-fifth falling below 49%. This profile is in contrast to that which obtains at the secondary phase. Within the same three categories used above, only about one-third of the much smaller number of Travelling pupils enrolled have an attendance rate above 80%, a further one-third averages 50-79% and the rest average below 49%. There is, however, again a need to exercise a degree of caution in that some Travelling pupils, especially those from Fairground and Circus families, may only be able to attend their base school for a relatively short period during the winter. When travelling, they may attend other schools en route or

maintain their studies with the use of a distance learning pack provided by their winter base school or a TES. Such arrangements could distort the overall statistics on Travelling pupil attendance.